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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the experiences of the Ector County Independent School District (Odessa, Texas) in selecting published achievement test to determine the effectiveness of a newly established curriculum. A task force of 24 faculty and staff met for three months. During this time they reviewed the district's philosophy of testing, developed new goals for the testing program, created a test evaluation form, and evaluated the current testing program. The two-page test form is included in the text of the paper. Major test publishers were invited to present their programs to the task force. Members of the task force received test materials in advance of presentations by publisher's representatives. Test materials were evaluated using the district's test evaluation form. Costs of implementing the district testing program were obtained from each publisher. The task force recommended the tests to be used and the schedule to be followed. It was assumed that the extensive involvement of faculty increased receptivity to test results and improved the quality of the testing program. A copy of the test evaluation form is included. (MDE)

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THE RIGHT ACHIEVEMENT TEST MAKES SENSE OF YOUR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

[Wayne Milligan]

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One of the most critical elements in curriculum development is frequently delegated to two or three individuals who may not have an intimate knowledge of the subjects taught, materials utilized, sequencing of activities and methodologies applied by teachers within the classroom.

In developing a continuous scope and sequence of activities, K-12, for a subject area, committees of teachers work with curriculum specialists over a period of many months to arrive at a curriculum guide tailored to meet the needs of the individual district. Textbooks and supplementary materials are recommended for adoption after long arduous hours of study and discussion by department heads and course content teachers. Inservice programs are developed based on mounds of data collected from needs assessment surveys of faculty and staff. Assessment of the effectiveness of the established curriculum and the resources brought to bear is centered on a standardized testing program.

These standardized tests, norm and/or criterion referenced, are normally selected by the testing department. This department traditionally utilizes testing experts and counseling personnel who probably will be coordinating the administration of the test. Occasionally central office curriculum specialists will be asked to review certain aspects. The major focus of this select group somewhat naturally focuses on the test construction; its reliability and validity, the ease of administering the test from a logistics perspective, the cost of administering the test, the objectives tested at each grade level, and the data analysis and reports which are utilized at the building and district level for dissemination to the Trustees and community. These are obviously worthwhile considerations but can overlook some major underlying purposes of the testing program.

If we only concern ourselves with the objectives taught at each grade level and not the time of year, we may administer the test prior to complete

instruction. Likewise, the method utilized in testing the objective may not be the method utilized by the teachers in teaching the objective nor may the test printouts, designed for central office consumption, be useful to teachers. Consequently, if less than favorable results are obtained from the testing program it may precipitate major changes in the curriculum and inservice programs based on inaccurate data. This could lead to a breadkown in a carefully developed curriculum and frustration with inservice efforts. Thus the unsavory prospect of a test selected by a few dictating the curriculum may unknowingly materialize.

ESTABLISHING THE TASK FORCE

When the Ector County (Odessa) Independent School District (K-12; enr: 25,000) decided to select a testing program to assess the effects of a recently revised curriculum and scope and sequence plans, we decided that teachers, the developers and implementors of the curriculum, should form the core of the selection committee. Twenty four (24) members of the faculty and staff comprised of eleven (11) teachers (K-12) by grade level and subject area, seven (7) counselors; elementary, junior high, high school, and vocational; six (6) administrators; principals and central office personnel, and five (5) ex officio members representing testing, guidance, special education, and elementary and secondary education were selected to serve on the Task Force.

HOW THE TASK FORCE PROCEEDED

The Task Force met for the first time and began a series of weekly meetings that continued for three (3) months. During this period, the Task Force reviewed and updated the philosophy of the Testing Program, developed new goals, formulated questions used as indicators on the Test Evaluation

Form, and began the process of evaluating the current program.

In the interim, representatives of major test publishers were apprised of our search, invited to present their testing program to the committee, and asked to send materials for review if the invitation was accepted. All responded positively. The following procedure was implemented:

> Each Task Force member received a set of test materials for review one week prior to the company's presentation. The materials included the new achievement tests and other supportive tests. During the presentation, the company resprsentatives provided their responses to the questions on the Test Evaluation Form which they had received in the acceptance letter and shared information deemed important.
>
> Each Task Force member made his/her own evaluation of each company's product using the Test Evaluation Form as the scoring instrument. The completed form was returned to the chairperson at the close of each meeting. A weighted system, developed in the Planning, Evaluation and Research Department, was used in the scoring process and yielded an overall weighted score. The scores were combined and averaged - giving each product an average score.

We believe this method provided the fairest approach to the test selection process diminishing the influence or charismatic control of any single individual normally present in discussions and revealed the Task Force's choice of the most appropriate test.

Prior to summer vacations, the Task Force received information regarding test reports needed by the various departments, special programs (local, state, and federal) and in overall program planning.

With the completion of the test content phase the second phase, test administration and scoring, of the test evaluation process was implemented. A letter was mailed to all participating test companies requesting that they submit cost estimates for test materials and scoring services. These cost estimates were to be based on grade levels tested, students in each grade, the different tests administered at each grade, and technical assistance provided.

When the cost specifications were received, the committee met and reviewed the results of test evaluations and cost estimates.

This review ultimately lead to a final decision in the selection of the norm-referenced Achievement tests and other supportive tests to be used in the Ector County Independent School District. The Task Force after reviewing program needs, school calendar, and instructional priorities recommended a Testing Program Schedule.

TEST EVALUATION FORM

INDICATORS	RANK (1-5)
Test Administration	
1. How much time is required for administering the test?	
2. Is special equipment necessary to administer the test? Is extra staff required?	
3. Are the instructions for students clear and concise? Please give examples.	
4. Are field test items included?	Rank _____

Test Characteristics

1. Please explain the test's reliability coefficient, its statistical validity, its standard error of measurement, and the standard deviation.
2. What is the spread of questions from top to bottom?
3. Are frequency histograms available?
4. To what degree is the test skewed?
5. Will the test level remain the same throughout the school year? If no, explain rationale.
6. How, when, and where was the test normed? What was the group size?

Rank _____

Curriculum

1. Does the test correlate with state adopted textbooks and essential elements in Chapter 75? To what degree?
2. Does the test correlate with the objectives for the state mandated criterion-referenced test (Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills)?

Rank _____

Test Development

1. What is the reading level of the test and how was it determined?
2. What is the grade span of each form?
3. What is the basic purpose of the test and who is its audience?
4. What is the value of the test?
5. Who gets the greater use from the test?
6. To what degree has your company worked to eliminate test bias?

Rank _____

Reporting

1. What is the form of student reporting?
2. Is an item analysis report available? If yes, how extensive is it?
3. Will the test results be useful to parents as well as staff?
4. What is the turn around time on test results?

Rank _____

Special Populations

1. Were bilingual students included in the norming population?
2. What provisions have addressed the limited English population?
3. Will there be a system of testing and scoring special education?

Rank _____

Supportive Tests

1. Academic Aptitude
2. Affective Behavior Inventory
3. Criterion-Referenced
4. Diagnostic Tests
5. General Aptitude
6. Other

Rank _____

Overall Rank _____

TASK FORCE RESULTS

What are the major gains from our selection process? We have developed as consistent and comprehensive a curriculum assessment program as instructionally feasible and completes the circular process of curriculum, instruction, assessment and inservice utilizing the primary implementors of the process. With teachers forming the core of the selection process, they will be more receptive to the test results and if results are below expectations, the testing program will come under the same rigorous scrutiny as previously bestowed on the curriculum and instruction.

If you're satisfied with the standard approach to the test selection process, then our method isn't for you. But if traditional methods have lead to counterproductive efforts and frustration, perhaps our process is worth a try.